

Transcript of TheSkillfulMind.com Podcast 003 – The WOOP goal setting method

Hello again and welcome to Episode Three of the podcast.

I'd like to start off this particular podcast by apologising for the quality of the audio. I've just moved into a new office and there's quite a bit of echo. I apologise for that. And also you might notice on the letter 'S' that some of the whistle was picked up by the microphone I'm hoping to have that sorted out by next time. but apologies for now.

What I've tried to do is get through this one as quickly as possible give you all the information you need. Obviously, as usual, all the details will be over on the podcast website, which is theskillfulmind.com/podcast/003.

Okay, and today we're going to move on and talk about a process known as, WOOP.

Now WOOP is a system that was developed by Gabriele Oettingen, who is a professor of psychology and her main specialty was in working out how people think and act, with regard to the future.

And one of the things that she found, was that a lot of people who set goals, use a process of visualisation. And although visualisation is an excellent tool for things like setting goals, it also has a downside. And that downside is, as I've mentioned before, that the mind doesn't know the difference between something that's vividly imagined and something that's actually occurred.

And so what she was finding in her studies, was that these people that used visualisation as a technique for achieving their goals, the mind thought to itself, "Well, if I'm already achieved this, then why do I need to put so much effort into progressing with it now?" And so the motivation was lost, or at least lost a certain amount, and people found it much more difficult to achieve their goals.

So together with her husband, who is also a professor of psychology. His name is Peter Gollwitzer, they came up with this system called WOOP.

So I'll go through this system very quickly, the information that you need, together with links to various websites that can give you more information should you need it, and you'll also find a download on that page for the worksheet to help you set these goals for yourself.

So, first of all is the W.

W in this case is for WISH. And before we've always used the term GOAL.

The reason, WISH is used in this particular process, is because it doesn't necessarily have to be for a goal.

You can actually use this process for things like changing habits, for making behavioural changes, for learning new skills, or just for general decision making.

And so, the process isn't always used specifically for a goal, so in this case it stands for wish.

Now, with the WISH, it also doesn't need to be specific, like in the SMART setting. As long as your goal is challenging, compelling and realistic, it can be vague. It doesn't have to be specific.

Now there's no problem with using the SMART system to come up with your wish in the first place. That process is fine for that, and will work perfectly happily.

So once you've got your particular wish, whatever that thing is, you then move on to the first 'O'. Now your 'O' is for OUTCOME. So, what is the desired outcome for this particular change that you want to make. You need to get very clear on what that is. And then you use the same technique as in the SMART system of using visualisation.

So once you know what your outcome is going to be. You then need to visualise in your mind, how you will feel once you've completed it.

How will it make you feel. How will your life change once you've achieved it. What will you be doing. Where will you be doing it. What will you be feeling while you're doing it. How will it make you feel inside. Will you feel healthier. Will you feel fitter. Will you have a clearer mind. All those sorts of things.

So spend a good while working out what your actual outcome would be, and how the outcome would make you feel, once you've achieved it.

And then we move on to the second 'O', which is OBSTACLE.

Now this is the part where it's not in the smart system.

Because of what I said earlier, the fact that visualisation helps you lose your motivation, what she discovered was that the way to stop that demotivation, was to find out beforehand what your obstacles were.

And so this section is all about finding those obstacles. So, once you've got your wish, and you've got your outcome, and you've visualise what your life is going to be like, once you've reached outcome, the next step is to work out all of your obstacles.

Everything you can think of that could possibly stop you from achieving your goal. That would include things like, are you a procrastinator? Do you find yourself sitting on Facebook or flicking through Twitter for hours on end? Do you suffer from negative emotions? You've got bad habits that make it difficult for you to concentrate sometimes? Do you lose interest easily? Do you watch television when really you should be doing something else? Do you lose focus easily?

All those sorts of things. Make a big long list of everything you can think of that may become an obstacle to achieving your outcome.

And then once you've got that, you can enter into the last part of this system which is the plan 'P' is for PLAN.

Like I said before any goal without a plan is really just a dream.

The difference with the plan in WOOP, though, is that the plan is about how you will mitigate the obstacles that you thought of previously.

So that again, is a very simple thing to do.

Take your list of obstacles. And for each of those obstacles, you need to write down an IF... THEN.

So, for each of those obstacles, you need to make a list of. If this happens, then I will do this. If 'X', then I will do 'Y'.

And what this does, is it helps you to pre-empt any problems and issues that may come up. So that you can immediately address them.

What tends to happen normally, is as soon as we get into that sort of situation, we lose momentum. We forget about our goals and move on with something else. And this system stops that from happening.

So there you go, simple system, W for wish. O for outcome. O for obstacle, and P for plan.

All the details and information will be over on the website as I mentioned earlier, so click on over to theskillfulmind.com/podcast/003.

And if you've got any questions or comments, leave them on the page. Until next time, I'll speak to you soon.